

Decision 01-01-011 January 04, 2001

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Application of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority for an order authorizing construction of an at-grade crossing at Park Avenue (V182.00) by the light rail transit line of the Vasona Light Rail Project in the City of San Jose, County of Santa Clara.

Application 00-09-037  
(Filed September 13, 2000)

**OPINION**

**Summary**

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) requests authority to construct an at-grade crossing at Park Avenue by the light rail transit line of the Vasona Light Rail Project in City of San Jose, Santa Clara County.

**Discussion**

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) was created as a County department by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors on June 6, 1972 to oversee the region's transportation system. VTA's primary responsibility since its creation has been the development, operation and maintenance of the bus and light rail system within the County. VTA separated from the County of Santa Clara and merged with the region's Congestion Management Agency in January 1995, thereby it gained the additional responsibility of managing the County's blueprint to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

The Vasona Light Rail Project will be an extension to the existing 28.6-mile VTA light rail system (see Appendix A). The alignment of the proposed Vasona

Corridor extends from downtown San Jose to the Vasona Junction in City of Los Gatos. The northerly terminus of the alignment is at the intersection of West San Carlos Street and Woz Way in downtown San Jose, where the Vasona line connects to the existing Guadalupe Corridor line. From this point, the alignment extends to the west along West San Carlos Street to Delmas Avenue, passing under State Route 7. The line extends north along the east side of Delmas Avenue to San Fernando Street, at which point the alignment turns west again. The line continues to the San Jose/Diridon Station on an alignment to the north of San Fernando Street, crossing Los Gatos Creek on a proposed new bridge. The segment west of Autumn Street, including the location where the line crosses the existing Union Pacific Railroad Company's (UP) and Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board's (Caltrain) Diridon Yard tracks, is underground. After crossing under the yard tracks at the San Jose/Diridon Station, the alignment returns to the surface and heads in a southerly direction along the west side of the Diridon Yard tracks. From a point just south of Park Avenue, the proposed alignment utilizes the existing Vasona railroad corridor. The project remains within the railroad corridor all the way to the Vasona Junction in City of Los Gatos. Exiting freight rail service in this corridor will continue unchanged, although the existing single track will be relocated in many areas to allow for construction of the light rail tracks.

The proposed project is expected to be funded in three phases. Phase 1 constructs the portion of the project from downtown San Jose to the Downtown Campbell Station. Phase 2 extends the line from Downtown Campbell Station to the Winchester Station. Phase 3 extends the line from Winchester Station to the Vasona Junction Station in City of Los Gatos.

Other crossings included in Phase 1 are three grade separated crossings at Montgomery Street, Cahill Street, and Diridon Yard (subject of A.00-09-033), two

at grade pedestrian crossings at the San Jose Diridon Station (subject of A.00-09-036), and State Route 87 grade separated crossing (subject of A.00-09-038).

The light rail transit facility tracks will cross Park Avenue at-grade. The at-grade crossing is the most financially and environmentally acceptable choice and is in keeping with the open access concept of light rail transit. Alternative to at-grade crossings are depressing the street below the tracks, depressing the tracks below street level, elevating the street above the tracks, and elevating the tracks above the street. Each of these alternatives may be physically impossible. Other problems would also be created with a grade-separated crossing, such as conflicts with existing development and utilities, noise generation, aesthetic impacts and the creation of possible hazards due to flooding caused by depressing rail or street facilities.

VTa is the lead agency for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended, Public Resources (PR) Code Sections 21000, et seq. On May 4, 2000, a Notice of Determination was filed with the Secretary of Resources and the Santa Clara County Clerk, which found that "The project will not have a significant effect on the environment."

The Commission is a responsible agency for this project under CEQA, and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's environmental documentation. The site of the proposed project has been inspected by the Commission's Rail Safety and Carrier Division — Rail Crossings Engineering Section staff. Staff examined the need to construct the proposed Line, as indicated in the Exhibits attached to the application, and recommends that the application be approved.

The application was found to be in compliance with the Commission's filing requirements, including Rules 38 to 41 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure. A site map of the grade crossing is as shown on plans attached to the application and Appendix A.

In Resolution ALJ 176-3047, dated September 21, 2000 and published on the Commission Daily Calendar on September 22, 2000, the Commission preliminarily categorized this application as ratesetting, and preliminarily determined that hearings were not necessary. Since no hearings were held, this preliminary determination remains accurate. The Commission's Rail Safety and Carriers Division recommends that this application be granted. Given these developments, public hearing is not necessary, and it is not necessary to disturb the preliminary determinations made in Resolution ALJ 176-3047.

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 311 (g) (2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

### **Findings of Fact**

1. Notice of the application was published in the Commission Daily Calendar on September 21, 2000. There are no unresolved matters or protests; a public hearing is not necessary.
2. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) requests authority to construct an at-grade crossings at Park Avenue by the light rail transit line of the Vasona Light Rail Project in City of San Jose, Santa Clara County.
3. Construction of the proposed project is an essential element in the construction of the Vasona Light Rail Extension Project.
4. Public convenience and necessity require the construction of the at-grade crossing.

5. Public safety requires that modifications to the vicinity of the crossing, traffic signal phasing, and warning signs and striping be made as set forth in Appendix B.

6. VTA is the lead agency for this project under the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended.

7. The Commission is a responsible agency for this project, and has reviewed and considered the lead agency's Final Environmental Impact Report.

**Conclusion of Law**

The application should be granted as set forth in the following order.

**O R D E R**

**IT IS ORDERED** that:

1. Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is authorized to construct an at-grade crossings at Park Avenue to be identified as crossing 82D-2.7 by the light rail transit line of the Vasona Light Rail Project in City of San Jose, Santa Clara County, at the location and substantially as shown in Appendix A.

2. Clearances and walkways shall be in accordance with General Order (GO) 143-B.

3. Construction and maintenance costs shall be borne in accordance with an agreement which has been entered into between the parties. A copy of the agreement shall be filed with the Commission prior to starting construction.

4. Within 30 days after completion of the work under this order, VTA shall notify the Commission in writing that the authorized work was completed.

5. This authorization shall expire if not exercised within two (2) years unless time is extended or if the above conditions are not met. Authorization may be revoked or modified if public convenience, necessity, or safety so require.

The application is granted as set forth above.

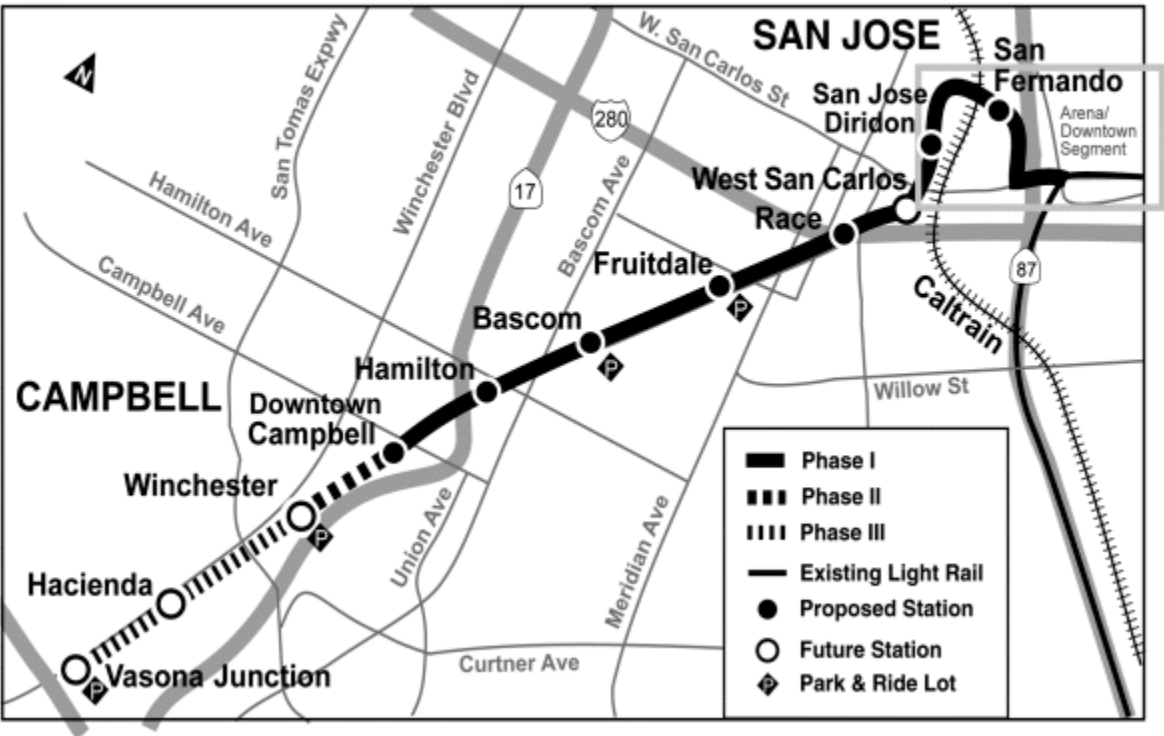
Application 00-09-037 is closed.

This order is effective 30 days from today.

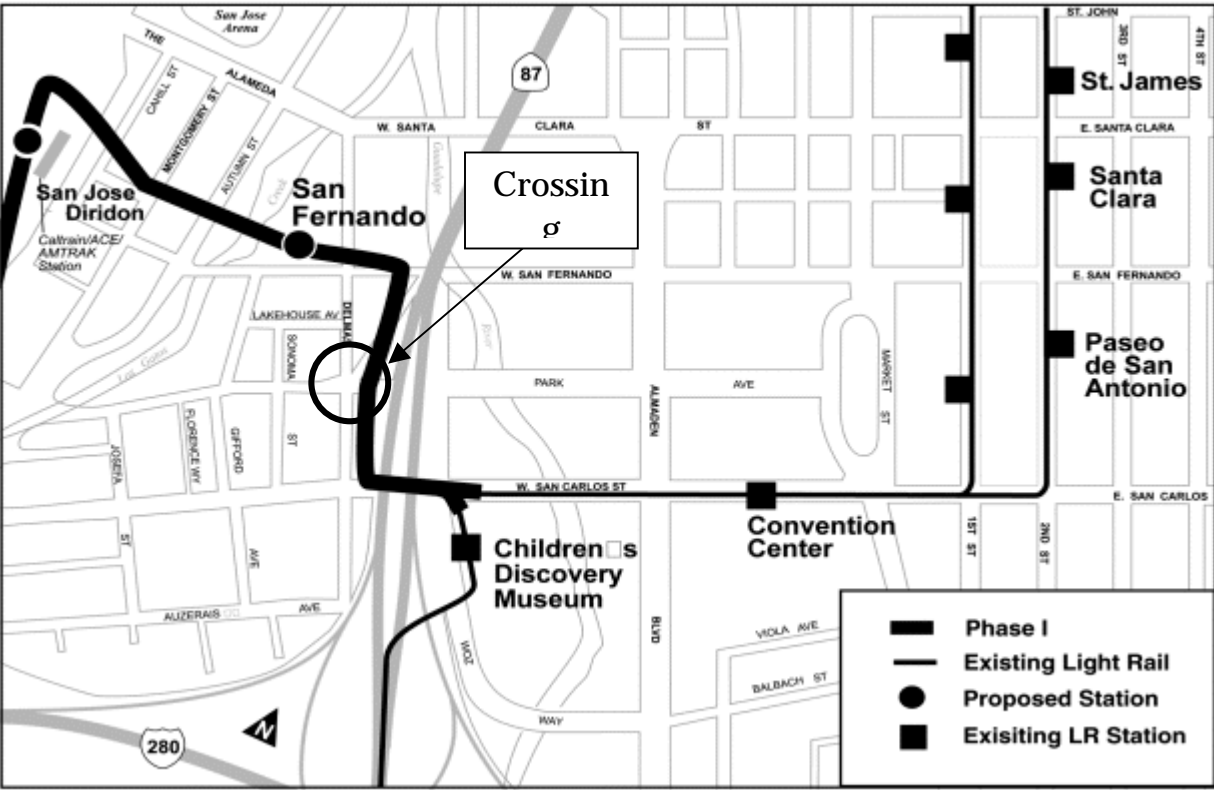
Dated January 04, 2001, at San Francisco, California.

LORETTA M. LYNCH  
President  
HENRY M. DUQUE  
RICHARD A. BILAS  
CAROL W. WOOD  
JOHN R. STEVENS  
Commissioners

# VASONA LIGHT RAIL PROJECT



Detail of Arena/Downtown Segment



Maps Not to Scale





**Modifications to the Vicinity of Crossing**  
**Traffic Signal Phasing**  
**Warning Signs and Striping**

Park Avenue consists of four lanes, two lanes in each direction, with a westbound left turn lane. Park Avenue and Delmas Avenue intersection is a five-legged signalized intersection. Delmas Avenue intercepts Park Avenue to form four-legs of the intersection. The State Route (SR) 87 off-ramp enters the intersection just east of the Delmas Avenue southbound approach. The proposed grade crossing of Park Avenue is parallel to Delmas Avenue, on the east side of the intersection of Park Avenue and Delmas Avenue.

The SR 87 off-ramp will be shifted to the east to make room for the light rail alignment. A new set of traffic signals controlling eastbound Park Avenue will be installed east of the tracks. The existing traffic signal heads on the west side of the intersection will be removed. A new set of traffic signals will be installed for SR 87 off-ramp.

The movement of light rail vehicles (LRVs) at signalized intersections will be controlled by signals for exclusive LRV use. The LRV signals will be of standardized traffic signal hardware, using 12-inch lenses and standard back plates. The signals will be provided on both the near side and the far side of the intersection and shall be located between the tracks. The signal aspect will be bars, in accordance with the Vasona Safety Criteria and the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Part Ten, for Light Rail Transit Traffic Control Devices. Pedestrian signal heads will be placed on all the sidewalk approaches to the grade crossing to control pedestrian traffic across the crossing.

Pedestrian crosswalks will be striped on both sides of the grade crossing.  
Pedestrian warning signs "Look Both Ways" will be located at the crossing.  
Pedestrian tactile strips conforming to the federal government's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements will be placed on all sidewalk crossing tracks.